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ABSTRACT

A description of the status and role of English language use and instruction in Syria, in which English has been given the status of the first foreign language, is presented. The following topics are reported on: (1) general usage; (2) English within the educational system, including the length of English training, testing, syllabus construction, English for special purposes, adult education, and radio and television instruction; (3) the qualifications, supply, training, and recruitment of teachers; (4) the availability of instructional and audiovisual materials; (5) administrative issues related to English instruction; (6) development and planning of English instruction; (7) English instruction outside the public educational system; (8) British, American, and other agency support for English instruction; (9) commercial and creative publishing opportunities; (10) current research; and (11) other information sources. It is concluded that although there are many shortcomings in English instruction at all levels, there have also been significant accomplishments in enrollment increases, expansion of postsecondary education, a general educational shift in favor of English use, and adequate supplies of texts and teachers. Further consolidation of English as the primary foreign language is foreseen, along with opportunities to improve standards and materials. An appendix lists the required books for students of the English Department of Damascus University, 1983-84. (MSE)

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ENGLISH TEACHING PROFILE

Country: Syrian Arab Republic

Date: 1984

1. ROLE AND STATUS OF ENGLISH

The Syrian Arab Republic has lent official weight to the importance of English by according it the status of first foreign language. It may seem surprising, then, that neither the standard of English nor the extent to which it is spoken entirely match up to this status. Among the reasons which will be put forward to explain this anomaly, three should be noted at the outset as they represent the background against which any discussion of English language teaching in Syria should be set:

(i) French was for many years the pre-eminent foreign language; it is still widely taught and spoken, and remains particularly popular in the northern and western areas. It is favoured by the older generation and by many families that have close connections with Lebanon. Within the secondary school system there is provision for equal numbers of children to opt for French or English as their foreign language. In practice, however, only around 25% of school children have taken up French in preference to English in recent years. This 25%:75% balance now seems to reflect roughly the relative importance of French and English as foreign languages in the national life.

(ii) For some twenty years Syria's contacts with Western countries were sparse and relations were often strained. Changes in the international political climate over the last few years have not, perhaps, greatly affected the average Syrian's opportunities for contact with the English language; but they have greatly increased his motivation to learn and to use English, and there has been a resurgence of interest in foreign

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language learning at a popular level. Further, during the last ten years or so increasingly large numbers of Syrians were lured by high salaries to the Gulf states, where they discovered the importance of English in international business.

(iii) This said, it should be borne in mind that English does not have an entrenched position in Syrian society. It is not used as a medium of instruction at any level of education. Nor is it used as an internal medium of communication either for business or for social purposes.

Despite the effects of these factors on the standard of English in Syria several indicators suggest that the situation may improve fairly rapidly. Firstly a Presidential decree was promulgated towards the end of 1983, instructing all universities in Syria to teach all students in all years a foreign language - normally English. This obviously indicates a high level of concern which, if it is continued into other areas of education, could prove even more important. Secondly, Syria is generally becoming an increasingly English-rich environment. Jordanian TV's Foreign Channel broadcasts about three and a half hours of English language TV a day; Jordanian TV's regular channel and Syrian TV both broadcast many English language films dubbed into Arabic; there are programmes on teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) on both Syrian and Jordanian TV, although the standard is very low; and on Syrian radio there are broadcasts in English on FM and AM and programmes containing western pop music. As regards foreign radio, BBC and VOA ELT programmes have good audiences; while home videos are very popular and are frequently in English. Thirdly, about a dozen private language institutes have been opened in Damascus, and although they are largely ineffective their popularity indicates a desire to learn English. Fourthly, the British Council now operates a Direct Teaching of English (DTE) Operation and three ELT projects (see below); while the Americans have also established an English Language Teaching Centre in Damascus. The result of all these factors is that a very large number of Syrians have a smattering of English and many (eg graduates, clerks, officials, shopkeepers, technicians, etc.) would like to be fluent. Thus, although only a few are fluent at present (typically doctors and businessmen who have travelled abroad) it can be expected that the number will increase significantly in the future.

2. ENGLISH WITHIN THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Duration of English Training

For the great majority of children educated within the state education system, English tuition begins on entering preparatory school, when twelve or thirteen years old.

Within the state system, there is no teaching of English at the elementary level. There is no lack of will to do so but financial and other considerations make it impracticable at present.

An increasing number of private schools operate in Syria, most of which introduce English at the elementary level. The syllabus varies considerably from school to school but has in each case to be approved by the Ministry of Education. The quality of instruction is extremely variable and relies heavily on moonlighting secondary school teachers.
English is studied for six years at the secondary level: three years in preparatory school, three years in secondary school. This applies to state and private institutions alike.

Examinations

The principal school examinations are the Brevet at the end of preparatory school and the secondary school certificate, or Baccalaureate, at the end of secondary school. The English language papers in the latter examination represent by far the most widespread qualification in English in Syria. Papers are set by the First Inspector of English personally. The exam contents must not deviate in any way from what is obviously contained in course books. The exam must also, for economic reasons, fit on one side of foolscap thus rendering reading comprehension and similarly lengthy questions problematic. Marking and general standards are controlled by the Ministry.

English is taught and examined as one of a wide range of courses in higher and further education. However, this is generally incidental to training in some field other than language and the examination is not regarded as a formal qualification in English as is the Baccalaureate. No institution, other than the Ministry of Education and the universities, is entitled to issue an official qualification in English. However, the English Language Teaching Centre in Damascus does set exams which determine whether civil servants have sufficient command of English to study overseas.

British examinations in English are arranged on a regular basis at the British Council in Damascus. As regards the Cambridge examinations about forty candidates per annum sit the Preliminary English Test of whom about 80% pass, one hundred sit the First Certificate in English (FCE) of whom about 60% pass, and from six to ten sit the Certificate of Proficiency in English (CPE) of whom one or two pass. It is hoped to increase the number of FCE candidates to about 120 per annum in response to heavy demand from the private language schools. The English Language Testing Service (ELTS) test is arranged once or more every month with an average of seven candidates per sitting. From 1985 it is planned to phase out the Cambridge exams and phase in the Royal Society of Arts "Communicative" exams. Other English-medium exams that are arranged there are GCE O and A levels, Chartered Institute of Insurers, and City and Guilds of London exams. There are perhaps one or two candidates in a year for each exam.

Foreign qualifications in English, as in other subjects, are not automatically recognized in Syria and must be assessed and approved by the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Higher Education. However British qualifications, especially the Cambridge exams, are held in high regard.

No specific requirement makes advancement in the educational system conditional on a qualification in English. On the other hand, the Baccalaureate is an entry requirement for the universities and certain other forms of post-secondary training, and a pass in English is implicit in this requirement.

Syllabuses and Hours

Throughout the secondary school system, in both state and private education, the syllabus for English language is set and controlled centrally through the Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education. This applies even to the choice of supplementary materials and to the weight to be given, in terms of teaching hours, to the various parts of the syllabus. There is no regional, institutional or minority group variation; the textbooks were compiled and are periodically revised by the English language section of the Inspectorate, and are printed and distributed by the Ministry.

The hours for English are at present (1984):

Preparatory school: all 3 years	5 x 50-minute periods per week
Secondary school:	
First year:	5 " " " " "
Second scientific:	5 " " " " "
Third scientific:	5 " " " " "
Second literary:	8 " " " " "
Third literary:	7 " " " " "

At the tertiary level the English degree syllabus is set by the universities themselves. There is some minor variation between universities, but the Council of Higher Education acts as a coordinator both of standards and of the broad outlines of the syllabus.

In the teaching of English as a subsidiary or supplementary subject there is, however, considerable variation between faculties, both in the weight it receives and in the choice of texts. The hours allotted to English in 1984 at Damascus University were:

Faculties of Letters and Law	4 hrs pw for all 4 years
Faculties of Commerce and Education	6 hrs pw for 1 of 2 semesters in each of all 4 years
Faculties of Education, Science, Jurisprudence and Fine Art	4 hrs pw for 1 of 2 semesters in each of all 4 years
Faculty of Pharmacy	6 hrs pw for 1 of 2 semesters in each of all 6 years
Faculty of Medicine	6 hrs pw for the first 3 years 6 hrs pw for 1 of 2 semesters in each of years 4 and 5
Faculties of Dentistry and Veterinary Science	6 hrs pw for 1 of 2 semesters in each of the first 3 years 4 hrs pw for 1 of 2 semesters in each of years 4 and 5
Faculties of Electrical, Civil and Mechanical Engineering and the Faculty of Architecture	4 hrs pw in all 5 years
Higher Institute for Political Science	5 hrs pw for all 3 years

Some attempt is made to teach English appropriate to the specialization; the OUP English Studies Series and the Collier Macmillan Special English Series have been drawn on, while some teachers have attempted to devise their own texts. The Departments of English are nominally responsible for the Inter-Faculty English programme but can do little to harmonize standards or syllabus.

English Language and Literature are taught as a degree subject at the Universities of Damascus, Aleppo, Tichrin and Ba'ath. In 1983 they produced about 400 English graduates. However, with 7,000 students enrolled in the Damascus English Department alone, and approximately 5,000 at the other universities combined, the wastage is obviously enormous.

A specimen of the BA required reading list for English Language and Literature at the University of Damascus is attached as an Appendix. This is representative, with a few minor variations, of the pattern of studies in all four universities.

The English syllabus and textbooks for vocational, industrial and other training institutes are set by the Ministry of Education. However, not all such institutes are under the direct control of this Ministry, and where control is exercised by other Ministries (such as those of Health and Industry) its role is an advisory one. Typical hours for English would be two hours a week over a two-year period.

English for Specific Purposes

Generally speaking, very little specialization has been achieved within the teaching of English language in Syria, although the situation is now very slowly improving.

In the secondary school system, pupils who fail the Brevet are sent to industrial schools where they pursue an English syllabus which uses materials devised to teach English for Specific Purposes (ESP), published by Longmans. Other pupils opt for a literary or scientific specialization in their last two years prior to the Baccalaureate. Differentiation in the English language syllabuses reflects this only to the extent that the science streams study reading passages which depict certain well-known scientists and their discoveries, or discuss points of elementary general science.

At the postgraduate level in the universities there is considerable ESP activity, thanks to the two programmes of the Key English Language Teaching Scheme (KELT) at Aleppo and Damascus. The ODA-supported programme at Qabun Vocational Training Centre (VTC) also works on ESP lines. At the undergraduate level there has been some attempt at ESP (see above), but the extent to which this has been effective varies considerably from faculty to faculty. It is dependent on such factors as the total hours available, the initial standard of the undergraduates, the talents and interests of the teachers and the degree of enthusiasm and support forthcoming from individual Deans. The English departments would like to have more than the present nominal control over inter-faculty English teaching but, even if this were to come about, their resources are over-strained in coping with their large intake.

It is fair to say that, apart from the English Language Unit at Qabun VTC, in the vocational and further training institutions ESP teaching remains sketchy. The Ministry of Education has recommended, or written, passages appropriate to the skills or crafts offered, and these are to be used in conjunction with general English materials. However, the standards of English of the trainees and the interest and ability of the teachers, who are often part-timers, militate against effective use of the materials.

Adult Education

Besides the formal education available through the tertiary and vocational institutions already mentioned, some adult and youth training is available through centres run by the Ministry of Culture and National Guidance, and through the National Youth Movement. English language does not, however, feature in these programmes save that the Centres may have a few English books in the small libraries they maintain. There are also the private language schools discussed in Section 7 and the Direct Teaching Operation at the British Council Damascus, discussed above.

English by Radio and Television

There is no schools programme on the Syrian radio network, but during the school year Syrian television has an early evening education slot of one and a half hours on weekdays. This is widely watched by children and adults alike; the BBC's Walter and Connie series has been screened twice within this slot in the last few years and proved very popular. Neither the Television Authority nor the Ministry of Education (which plans the programmes) has so far attempted to devise an English language series of their own. No other form of distance education exists at present.

3. TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Qualifications

Since 1975 it has been a requirement that all English teachers entering full-time employment in the secondary school system should have degrees in English; most in fact do, though a small number employed prior to 1975 are not graduates. All full-time teachers of English teach English only, not mixed subjects.

Supply

There is currently a shortfall of about 1,140 English teachers. This is being partially remedied by opening intermediate institutes in Damascus and Aleppo. However these prepare teachers only for preparatory school teaching. The Damascus Institute will run two-year courses with a total of 350 students each year.

In tertiary and vocational education there is an even greater scarcity of full-time teachers of English and institutions often rely on part-time staff, usually borrowed from secondary schools. It has to be acknowledged that the status of language teachers in these institutions, outside university departments of English, is not high and their interests are not well represented. For example, there is no language centre or unit in any university to coordinate teaching programmes across faculties, while the English departments have had only a tenuous connection with the teachers' work in the past.

It should be noted, in all fairness, that very similar remarks apply to the teaching of French, though the smaller scale of operations may make it a little easier to apply remedies.

Training and Professional Contacts

A degree in English, as in other subjects, is considered to be sufficient training for teaching at secondary level, and the great majority of full-time teachers enter the profession directly on graduation. One year of teacher training, available through the faculties of education, is an option taken up by less than 10% of English graduates; the salary inducement to do so is minimal. In 1975 training colleges for non-graduate preparatory school teachers were phased out, so that at this level teachers had no alternative to the faculties of education. However the Intermediate Institute in Damascus, which opened in 1983, provides non-graduates with the opportunity to teach in preparatory schools after a two-year course. Teacher training institutes run by the Ministry of Education cater only for elementary teachers.

There is a national union for all teachers, but no separate professional association to which English teachers can belong. Neither is there any professional journal or newsletter for them to receive.

In this context, the Joint Annual Summer Seminar, organized by the Ministry of Education for Syrian teachers of English, is the only available form of in-service training and organized professional contact (see Sections 6 and 9).

Difficulties of Recruitment

As shown above, there is a serious lack of trained English teachers at all levels of education. No doubt the Ministry of Education is acutely aware of this, but there are several obstacles to improvement:

i. While the Universities of Damascus and Aleppo produce a steady stream of English graduates, often of a very high standard, many of them find their way into non-teaching careers particularly in management; others find more lucrative teaching posts outside Syria.

ii. If large scale funds for postgraduate ELT training were available it is by no means certain that graduates would wish to spend the extra year in training, unless this became a statutory requirement for all teachers in all subjects, or strong inducements (eg salary) could be offered.

iii. In vocational institutes and in technical, medical and scientific branches of tertiary education, the general recognition of the value of language teaching is undoubtedly counterbalanced by a reluctance to spare overstretched funds to improve or increase the language teaching staff at the expense of other priorities.

4. MATERIALS SUPPORT

Secondary Level

Since the Ministry of Education (with the exception of Longman's contract to supply industrial schools) produces and prints all school textbooks of English, there is no shortage of supplies, though there are occasional delays in distribution.

Teachers rarely stray beyond the strict confines of the syllabus, nor are they expected to. Any diversity in materials derives from variety built into the syllabus. This consists in fact of occasional reading passages and poems featured in the textbooks, and of two obligatory supplementary readers (Ten

Short Stories and Tale of Two Cities) for the second and third years of secondary school. Good teaching techniques and skilful manipulation of the material could do much to offset the lack of free choice, but it is fair to say that few teachers have the training or the flair to achieve this.

There are plans to provide small sets of supplementary English readers for each school, possibly by the next school year. The choice of texts will, however, remain in the hands of the Ministry. It is not yet clear whether they will be optional or obligatory materials, nor whether they will feature in the examination.

In the late 1970s a decision was taken by the country's Supreme Council of Higher Education to produce and print textbooks to replace the imported ones. A list of the current textbooks for the English Department at Damascus University is attached.

A limited number of English literature books are available as commercially translated works.

Tertiary Level and Vocational Education

Though teachers have a somewhat freer hand in the use of materials, in practice little is done to exploit this opportunity to vary the students' diet. The reasons for this may be, firstly that the many part-time teachers are disinclined to spare the extra preparation time required, and secondly, that the hours allocated for English are often barely adequate to cover the prescribed syllabus. However the situation is very different in the KELT projects described in Section 8.

Audio-Visual Support in ELT

This is fragmentary at all levels of education.

Secondary school teachers of English are generally equipped with a few wall charts and flash cards and a few enthusiastic teachers have built up their own stock of such aids. Most schools have a silent film projector and, in addition to this technical oversight, no English teaching films are available. Very few schools have a tape or cassette recorder, and consequently there has been no local attempt to produce materials. There is no need as yet to equip schools with radio or TV sets (see Section 2).

Tertiary and vocational institutions are generally better equipped with educational hardware and several have language laboratories. With a few notable exceptions these aids are either not made available for English teaching, or are not exploited when available.

5. EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATION IN RELATION TO ENGLISH TEACHING

Standards of English at the secondary level are centrally controlled by the English Inspectorate of the Ministry of Education. The Senior Inspector of English directs fourteen local Inspectors; two of these are responsible for Damascus City, one for the Damascus Region and two for Aleppo City and Region, while the others are regionally distributed and based in Homs, Hama, Deraa, Sweida, Lattakia, Tartous, Idlib, Hassake-Raqaa and Deir-Al-Zor.

At the tertiary level the universities themselves are largely responsible for controlling standards. The primary responsibility rests with the University Council in each university, but reference may be made to the Council of Higher Education and ultimately to the Minister of Higher Education.

Within the vocational and further training institutions organized by various ministries, the responsibility for standards rests primarily with the directors of the institutions, but ultimately with the training sections of the Ministries concerned.

6. DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING OF THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

The opening of the intermediate institutes, the annual ELT Seminar arranged in cooperation with the British Council and USIS (see Section 9) and the annual award of ten bursaries for Ministry of Education teachers to attend Council Summer Schools in the UK are the only activities concerned with the development and planning of the teaching of English.

7. ENGLISH OUTSIDE THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Some twenty-five private commercial schools operate in Syria, half of them in Damascus; most of them offer evening classes in English and French among their range of subjects. They are obliged to obtain an operating licence from the Ministry of Education and to notify the Ministry of their curricula, but there is no close supervision of standards.

Their intake consists of working adults and a small proportion of students. Fees are low by international standards: typical fees (at 1983 prices) for languages are LS 250-350 for a three-month course at of three hours per week, ie £0.75 to £1.00 per hour, but charges as low as LS 3 (£0.35) per hour have been reported.

Standards have in the past been poor, but recent Cambridge examination results (ten passed out of twenty-three candidates) suggest the situation may be improving.

One or two of the private schools claim to teach commercial English, but it is difficult to judge how realistic this claim is and what standards of accomplishment obtain. None of the private candidates offered Business English.

8. BRITISH SUPPORT FOR THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH

From 1956 to 1977 there was virtually no British contribution to ELT in Syria, the British Council's extensive activities having been closed down. In the mid-1960s three British lecturers in English were attached to the Universities of Damascus and Aleppo, but their posts were terminated in 1967. At the same time a handful of Syrian teachers obtained short UK training awards in ELT, through the British Council's programme in Lebanon.

The British Council returned to Syria in 1977 and opened the British Cultural Centre in Damascus in 1978. Support for ELT during this period consisted of short UK training awards for Syrian teachers of English, and participation since 1977 in the Joint Summer Seminar for teachers of English. The seminars have been a great success and this year's will be the eighth. The major developments in British support for ELT are: the establishment of KELT projects at Damascus University in 1980, Qabun Vocational Training Centre in 1979 and Aleppo University in 1983, and a DTE Operation at the Council in 1980.

The DTEO opened in October 1980 with three classrooms, three teachers and 220 students in fourteen classes. After moving to the present premises in January 1982, the facilities increased to four classrooms with a high level of equipment, and staff has increased to a Director of Studies and ten teachers.

At present all regular courses are EMG (English for Media Groups), although a number of one-month ESP/ESG (English for Special Purposes/English for Special Groups) courses were offered in July and August 1983. These included English for Beginners. The summer courses were very successful and it is intended to repeat them every year.

Demand for places is high. During the September 1983 registration period, 500 candidates were tested for 215 places. Re-enrolment figures are consistently over 60%, the highest figure being more than 80%.

Complete beginners are not accepted, except during summer courses. We teach all levels above beginners, up to Cambridge Proficiency. The RSA skill-based courses have been introduced. Results in FCE have been good, with an average pass rate of over 60%. Results in CPE have been poor, with only one pass out of seven candidates.

Competition in the private sector is from the cultural centres of other countries and private language schools.

The KELT Project at Damascus University began in 1981 with the recruitment of two KELT officers. These are still at post and will remain until the project is completed in 1985 or 1986. The project's original aim was to raise the standard of non-specialist English language at the University. This is being realised through the activities of an ESP Centre which was developed as an independent research establishment. The following activities are provided:

a) Optional language courses for lecturing staff, the majority of whom are graduates of French or Russian universities.

b) Courses for postgraduate students at four levels, elementary through advanced for six hours per week for three and a half months, with about twelve students per group.

c) Compulsory ESP courses for MA students. All faculties are represented, the majority being medical students. The yearly intake is about 250 divided into four levels, who are taught for six hours per week for no more than sixty weeks.

d) In-service teacher-training seminars for ESP teachers working in the undergraduate non-specialist ELT programme outside the KELT ESP Centre.

e) An advisory service to the undergraduate ESP programmes, including advice on book selection and materials preparation.

The KELT project at Aleppo University began in 1983, one KELT officer arriving in February and the second in September. They have established an English Language Advisory Centre. The project is scheduled to finish in 1986. Its aim is to improve the English standards of students and staff for study and career use. The project also provides a full ELT advisory service to the University on English language curriculum, examinations, teacher training and the development of a permanent English teaching cadre. To meet these aims the project is running a Direct Teaching Operation for postgraduate students and university staff; enrolment is currently 130 but this will probably double within the next year. With a view to teacher training the KELTs are participating in the increasingly important applied linguistics component of a Higher Diploma in Linguistics.

The KELT project at Qabun Vocational Training Centre (just outside Damascus) began with the arrival of one KELT officer in September 1979 to occupy the post of Head of English Language Training. The brief was and is to supervise the English language training of executive personnel in state industries. At the end of the KELT officer's contract the post was redesignated as a "Category IV post"; this requires the postholder to act as a classroom teacher rather than a project manager, principally because of problems associated with obtaining Syrian counterparts. British assistance ends in 1984.

9. AMERICAN SUPPORT FOR ELT

American support for English teaching has also been severely limited during the last twenty years, though it was a little more effective than British support as the breaks in their diplomatic and cultural ties were somewhat shorter.

For a few years in the 1960s a summer seminar for English teachers was organized in Damascus with staff borrowed from the American ELT programme in Lebanon. This was revived in 1975 as the Joint Summer Seminar for teachers of English in conjunction with the Ministry of Education, and with British participation from 1977. At present the seminar lasts four weeks in each summer vacation and caters for up to thirty teachers, with visiting lecturers from the USA and UK.

With the assistance of USIS funds and Georgetown University, the State Planning Commission has established an English Language Training Centre within its Institute for Economic and Social Development, located in the centre of Damascus. This well-equipped Centre is staffed by Syrians who have obtained their Masters in TESOL from Georgetown. One hundred and sixty students from various ministries are enrolled in ten classes at four levels; sixty of them are from the Ministry of Agriculture. The Centre offers courses in General English based on American textbooks and has the role of certifying the linguistic ability of civil servants who wish to study in Anglophone countries.

There is an American Cultural Centre in Damascus run by the ICA Washington; it makes some awards for ELT training in the United States.

10. OTHER AGENCY SUPPORT

France, Germany, Spain and the USSR maintain cultural centres in Syria. The French Cultural Centre has over a thousand students.

11. COMMERCIAL OPPORTUNITIES

Cheaply produced editions of English literature and English language textbooks are being sold by universities to students of English departments. However, it is hoped that the introduction of the English Low Priced Books Scheme (ELBS) will alter this situation and encourage more English-speaking Syrians to purchase more cheaply produced British books.

There is a possible potential market for British books and software in some of the private language institutes.

12. CREATIVE WRITING

There is very limited local publishing activity in English. This is mainly done by postgraduates and graduates of the country's four universities' English departments. Some university professors publish textbooks and study aids in English for students of English departments.

13. CURRENT RESEARCH

No serious research in English language teaching is in progress in any Syrian institution, and no bibliography relevant to English language teaching can be offered.

14. BIBLIOGRAPHY AND SOURCES OF FURTHER INFORMATION

Annual statements on the English examinations and standards, and on enrolment and staff for English classes in the secondary school system, are available (in Arabic) from the English Language Section of the Inspectorate, Ministry of Education, Damascus.

15. GENERAL STATEMENT

Though this report may seem rather discouraging on many points and though there are undoubtedly many shortcomings in ELT at all levels of education, we should not overlook either the accomplishments of the last decade or the prospects for improvement.

School enrolment figures have increased steadily and there has been enormous expansion in higher and further education. Over and above this quantitative expansion, there has been a considerable shift within the educational system in favour of English as the primary foreign language. Virtually unaided by Britain or the USA, the traditional suppliers of ELT expertise, Syrian institutions have managed to a surprising extent to keep an adequate supply of English teachers and textbooks, although this has affected standards.

Syria has vigorous programmes of industrial and agricultural development, and of social welfare. These have begun to generate further needs in language training, both as an adjunct to the acquisition of new skills and techniques and as an aid to the search for outlets and markets abroad. Equally, after a period of intense introspection and search for identity, Syria is looking outwards with increasing confidence, establishing a new role in Middle Eastern affairs and a broader base of international contacts, both political and economic.

These factors suggest that the position of English as the first foreign language will be consolidated; they imply an opportunity to improve standards in English teaching and in English teaching materials; above all they suggest an increasing likelihood that English will be recognised as a tool in the service of national development, with consequent changes of emphasis in teaching and materials. The discussions and contacts made during the preparation of this survey were marked by a keen and critical awareness of current shortcomings and by an evident willingness to seek improvements. Furthermore, the high level concern regarding the importance of foreign language learning, and the increasing effectiveness of the Council's ELT activities in Syria, suggest that this awareness may lead to a steadily increasing level of English proficiency in Syria.

APPENDIX

A list of the required books for 1983-84, for the students of the English Department of Damascus University:

First year

1.	J M Ward: Practice in the Use of English	Grammar
2.	G F Arnold: Say it with Rhythm - Book One	Grammar
3.	A Modern English Grammar	Grammar
4.	M I Imhoof & H Hudson: From Paragraph to Essay	Composition
5.	L G Alexander: First Book in Comprehension	Composition
6.	Leavitt: Say it This Way	Composition
7.	J Haywood: The Penguin Book of English Verse	Verse
8.	A Bennet: Anna of the Five Towns	Prose
9.	W Golding: Lord of the Flies	Prose
10.	Y Daghistani: Making of Fiction	Prose
11.	A Miller: All My Sons	Drama
12.	G B Shaw: Arms and the Man	Drama
13.	G Mauger: Book One	French
14.	German Book	German
15.	Translation Book	Translation
16.	Sakafa Book and Al Arsoozi Book	
17.	Arabic Language	

Second year

1.	A Reference Grammar for Students of English	Grammar
2.	N Shehabi: General Phonetics	Grammar
3.	M D M Mackenzie: English Pronunciation Practice	Grammar
4.	R Forrest: Revision in English	Grammar
5.	J Arnold: Advanced Writing Skills	Composition
6.	R E Bailey: A Survival Kit for Writing	Composition
7.	H Fielding: Joseph Andrews	Prose
8.	J Swift: Gulliver's Travels	Prose
9.	D Defoe: Moll Flanders	Prose
10.	W Shakespeare: Hamlet	Drama
11.	W Shakespeare: Twelfth Night	Drama
12.	W Shakespeare: Henry the Fourth, Part One	Drama
13.	W Shakespeare: King Lear	Drama
14.	A Burgess: English Literature	English Literature
15.	G Mauger: Book One	French
16.	German Book	German
17.	Translation Book	Translation
18.	Arabic Language	Arabic
19.	Sakafa Second Year	

Third year

1.	R Quirk: University Grammar	Grammar
2.	J O'Connor: Intonation of Colloquial English	Grammar
3.	J Austen: Emma	Prose
4.	E Bronte: Wuthering Heights	Prose
5.	C Dickens: Hard Times	Prose
6.	T Hardy: Jude the Obscure	Prose
7.	English Poetry book	Poetry
8.	W Congreve: The Way of the World	Drama
9.	J Dryden: All for Love	Drama
10.	W Shakespeare: Anthony and Cleopatra NSSAS	Drama
11.	R B Sheridan: The Rivals	Drama
12.	Jenkyns: Latin for Today	Latin
13.	H Melville: Billy Budd	American
14.	N Hawthorne: The Scarlet Letter	American
15.	The Penguin Book of American Verse	American
16.	Criticism Book	Criticism
17.	Arabic Book	Arabic

Fourth year

1.	A Baugh & T Cable: History of the English Language	Grammar
2.	Samhori: English Linguistics	Grammar
3.	D H Lawrence: Women in Love	Prose
4.	G Orwell: Coming up for Air	Prose
5.	E M Forster: Howard's End	Prose
6.	J Conrad: Heart of Darkness	Prose
7.	Homer: The Iliad	World literature
8.	Sophocles: King Oedipus (Theban plays)	World literature
9.	Dante: The Divine Comedy-Hell	World literature
10.	Goethe: Faust: Part One	World literature
11.	Dostoyevsky: Crime and Punishment	World literature
12.	Balzac: Old Goriot	World literature
13.	Ibsen: Ghosts and other plays	Drama
14.	G B Shaw: Major Barbara	Drama
15.	J Osborne: Look Back in Anger	Drama
16.	S Beckett: Waiting for Godot	Drama
17.	S O'Casey: Three Plays	Drama
18.	J M Synge: The Playboy of the Western World	Drama
19.	Saaban: Literary Essay	Essay
20.	Criticism Book (for both third and fourth years)	